

Blue Devil:DCF - POX

by BioHaz

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Summary: Mike Ashton is not the only well known name in VR...

Blue Devil:DCF - POX

Untitled Document > Fuck/ was all Clay could think. He was racing around his little trailer, in the upper parts of Palm Springs. Palm Springs -- hell, the rest of the Cochlea Valley -- hadn't changed much over the past hundred years. Still, it was a quiet little town, a refuge for the stars and socialites of the time. With the disappearance of the Native American population, business had boomed around the Desert, the Indians' land now available to anyone with enough money.

Clay purchased a small plot of land on the border of one such abandoned reserve, close enough to the city to be livable, far enough away to be enjoyable. This little trailer served as Clay's home, and it usually brought him peace. Today, that wasn't the case.

/Fuck/ Clay thought again, the one word repeating in his mind. He quickly sat at the computer, fingers flying over the keyboard, the holoscreen in front of him a flurry of activity. /Shit, they're on the way!/ Clay glanced at a message box on the holoscreen, COPY branded across the top, a bar slowly filling up as well. /C'Mon/ Clay urged, eyes fleeting around the room, looking for any indication of trouble.

Clay launched a message window, quickly typing a farewell. /Kim, I love you/ Clay thought as he hit the SEND button.

\*BING\* The bell broke the silent air, the only sound in the room besides Clay's panting.

/Yes!!!!/ Clay mentally shouted in joy. Quickly ejecting the optical disk from the computer, Clay ran to the other end of the trailer. Entering his bedroom in a rush, Clay came to slide to a halt on his

knees, shoving open a hidden hatch in the far wall. Darting his head inside the compartment, Clay dropped the disk inside. A few seconds passed before, finally, a loud clang marked the disk coming to rest. Everyone needed a good hiding place, and that disk needed to be hidden.

Clay jumped up and ran to his computer again, checking the location of his pursuers. /Damn it, they're almost here!/ Clay thought, panicked.

Seating himself at the console, Clay's arm snaked out, reaching for a cord attached to the computer. His other hand went to the back of his head, lifting a small patch of hair, revealing a hole. Clay plugged the cord into the socket at the base of his skull, sighing slightly as the connection was made. Clay's fingers fluttered across the keyboard, a bit of his consciousness screaming at him that he was about to do something wrong.

/I don't have time to contemplate this/ Clay thought, his finger jamming the ENTER key down. A new message window sprung to life, the words PERSONALITY COPY and a bar barely full branded on it.

/They're only two minutes away/ Clay thought, watching as the PERSONALITY COPY guessed it would take another three minutes to finish its task. /Fuck/ Clay thought again. One minute and 45 seconds later, Clay began to feel the effects of the COPY. At the two-minute mark, Clay would fall unconscious as the program started to read his subconscious mind. He hoped enough was copied before they got here.

Ten seconds after that thought crossed Clay's mind, he saw his attackers outside the windows. Then he saw the small, black, round shape launched at his trailer. Glass shattered as the grenade found itself on the floor, its red LCD screen highlighting the dark room... 3...2... 1...

Clay slipped into unconsciousness, his personality being streamed to a remote server as the grenade destroyed the trailer Clay had called home.

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# Blue Devil:DCF "POX"
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### Written by Alex "BioHaz" Cook  
> Edited by Jason Tippitt<h3>
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"UN officials arrived in Palm Springs today, to deal with a recent outbreak of a mutated strain of pox. Colby Allen has details. Colby?"

"Thanks, Shelly. I'm standing in what used to be Palm Springs. As you can see behind me, the valley of the stars is in ruins. Nothing remains of Palm Springs, or much of the Cochlea Valley, for that matter.

"What was thought to be a minor case of a long-defeated disease, pox,

grew into something much more. Hospital authorities contacted the NAF once more cases of pox came in, and soon the Armed Forces arrived, medical authorities in tow. The NAF quickly quarantined the Valley, hard at work at finding a solution to this problem.

"Three hours later the solution arrived as a UN hovertank touched down. A JL team was seen exiting the HT, as well as a few executives. Next thing we were told was, Palm Springs and the surrounding towns were infected with a deadly virus. All personnel were seen pulling out soon after this; any local camera crews evacuated as well.

"As my colleagues and I were rushed to the hovervans, a plane could be seen approaching in the distance. The hovervan raced away, pulling into a bunker a few miles away. Once out of the van, I could see the plane again. More importantly, I could see the bomb that was just dropped on Palm Springs. After the explosion, you can see the results behind me. Flaming ruins are all that mark the Cochlea Valley.

"All we've been told since the explosion about ten minutes ago was, a mutated strain of pox had infected the populace. The UN is holding a press conference later today, where the answers to the obvious questions will be given. This is Colby Allen from the ruins of Palm Springs, signing off."

Kimberly's quivering finger pressed the OFF button on the holovision. The rest of the red-haired beauty's body was shaking as well, sobs of pain held barely at bay. Clay was gone, and he didn't even send a message saying goodbye.

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Kim sat in a dark dress, delicately woven with geometric designs of the deepest purple. A white handkerchief was held against her mouth as she silently cried. The priest drowned on about the dearly departed, and the gates of heaven, hoping the spiritual ramblings would help the grieving gathered before him. It did not help Kim.

Clay was gone; that was the one thought running through Kim's grief-stricken mind. Clay was gone.

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A delicate finger pressed the 'on' switch to the holovision, its owner securing the VR goggles to her face with the other hand. Kim was preparing for one of the biggest hacks she had ever taken part in. Regenetics was their target. Clay designed the ICE they were going to use to get into Regenetics' R&D database. This was a final tribute to Clay.

Reality swept away, replaced by the digital facade of a pub out of Ireland, the Irish bartender swearing up a storm to add the touch of authenticity. Kim hurried to the back, finding a table in the corner where her friends waited. Two men sat at the table Kim approached, each going over figures and programs, making sure they were prepared.

"Well, look who decided to join us. Thought you weren't gonna make it, TarotGirl. Pull up a chair," ArSiNiK said, his eyes never leaving the screen in front of him.

"ArSiNiK, Orbital. I came 'cause Clay would have wanted me here. Let's get to it, shall we?" Kim sat in between the two boys, firing her VR screen, launching the applications she would need for this hack.

"GreenMachine is already in. He should be making contact in..." brief pause as ArSiNiK looks at the time, "...three seconds." ArSiNiK propped his screen up, showing the other two at the table GreenMachine's current location, and the Regenetics database's location.

"Contact," an electronic voice rang out.

"GreenMachine, fire the first ICE. Clay had a very specific setup for this, and we're going to follow it to the T," Orbital spoke into the air.

/Got ya/ scrolled across the screen, GreenMachine's only connection to the group.

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GreenMachine was ready. The Regenetics database stood before him, its ICE patrol sweeping the area for anyone intending to do just what GreenMachine intended to do. Too bad the ICE would never find him.

GreenMachine brought his wrist to his face, peering at the readout. His programs were loaded, and the defense measures were working. /Here we go.../ was all GreenMachine thought as he sped towards the UN database.

The ICE patrolling Regenetics' sector were old designs. True, they had just been released a month prior, but in the virtual world, that was old. Already, the ICE faults had been found, and countermeasures coded and ready to go. GreenMachine was the test pilot, praying the defenses worked. His mind trailed to Clay, thinking this was what he would have wanted.

As his green blur of a form whizzed pass the ICE unnoticed, GreenMachine knew the programs were good. /Nobody could code like Clay/ GreenMachine thought sadly. /Now to harvest some information/

GreenMachine leapt to the top of the database, his avatar shimmering as it interfaced with the storage of information. /Accessing/ GreenMachine sent back to the group, launching the worm program that would get him into the database. /Here we go/ GreenMachine thought.

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\*BEEP\* The noise slightly jarred Kim, her concentration elsewhere. She readjusted and looked at the new message window, telling her a time-coded message had arrived for her.

/Who would have time-coded a message to me??/ Kim thought as she accepted the e-mail. She gasped in surprise as she saw Clay's address in the headers.

"Kim,  
> <font>

If you're reading this, I'm dead. Gawd, sounds really weird to say that. There is probably some sob story playing over the airwaves, talking about how Palm Springs needed to be destroyed. It's a lie, Kim. Regenetics has something big going on here, and I've barely scratched the surface of it. Human experiments, the works, and I think it's all UN-sanctioned. Kim, you've got to find out what they were doing here. I've copied what little information I've come across. You'll know where it is. I love you, Kim.

--CLAY"

Kim felt her emotions surfacing, about to overcome her. /No, damn it, not now. I have other things to worry about/ Kim steeled herself, returning to her task as watchdog. The ICE patrol hadn't noticed GreenMachine yet, but they would once he tapped the core.

/Streaming this to you guys/ GreenMachine told the group.

Information began scrolling across the screens. Different medical studies, new drugs, and other information. Kim paid little attention to what was there, instead watching the ICE patrols in GreenMachine's location and attempting to hold in the shock of Clay's time-delivered message. That was, until one word caught her attention.

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GreenMachine never felt so alive. He was walking on the edge and loving the rebellion of it all. He felt free, unfettered. He had never experienced such a moment of joy as this, this being one of his \ larger accomplishments. It is so sad when a life feeling such happiness is cut short.

"Sir, we have an unauthorized user entering the R&D database. We've got a ghost image of the hacker; that's all. What are your orders?" the mousy technician asked his superior in a nervous voice.

"Release the DOGS," the commanding officer said flatly.

The Technician hurried about his task, rushing to his terminal.  
"Launch the DOGS. Zero in on these coordinates."

The ranking officer let a smile cross his lips. The hunt had begun.

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Kim watched her monitor, scans pulsing out of her terminal every ten nanoseconds, the screen constantly updating the position of Regenetics' ICE programs. "Shit," she said breathlessly.  
"GreenMachine, you've got three DOGS heading your way!" Kim shouted into the connection, praying GreenMachine would hear her in time.

"I'm on my way," ArSiNiK stated. "Keep the connection open for as long as you can, GreenMachine. Kim, take over defense for Green. Orbital, you're covering my tail."

Kim connected to GreenMachine's console, taking over his defense programs. "Green, you're on offense. I've got you covered from here," Kim said, watching as ArSiNiK faded out of sight. Once ArSiNiK entered Regenetics' sector, Orbital jacked into his defense array.

Regenetics' virtual sector resembled an organic garden, in hopes of portraying a wholesome image to customers. The monstrosities bearing down on GreenMachine and ArSiNiK came nowhere close to fitting in such an image. Each DOG resembled a nightmarish hellbeast, dripping saliva and ichor from its huge maw.

ArSiNiK leapt at the first DOG, launching a virus in hopes of decoding the ICE before it became a problem. The beast faltered, its virtual shell rippling as it purged the foreign program.

Shooting up on the y-axis, ArSiNiK fired a volley of flood missiles at the two lagging DOGs. One DOG fell under the assault, while the other dodged and volleyed its huge shape into the air after ArSiNiK.

The hacker dropped quickly, a blade appearing in his hand. ArSiNiK arched the blade up, cutting the DOG's underside. Binary leaked from the animal, and it howled in pain as it crashed into the ground.

/They're too easy/ ArSiNiK thought to himself as he landed. Spinning to look at the lacerated DOG, ArSiNiK's eyes enlarged in shock. "They're not DOGs at all! GreenMachine, jack out now! They're Spiders!" The arachnid shape shucked the DOG skin.

"That's a UN ICE!!" Kim shouted, sweat beading on her brow. Odd how VR mimics life to such detail, creating sweat when a user is scared enough to loosen their bowels.

Her fingers flew across the keyboard, loaded new defense measures for GreenMachine. The DOG ArSiNiK had infected earlier howled as its skin split, huge spider legs jutting from its back. The Spider finished shedding the disguise, attacking GreenMachine as the last bits of skin dropped from its body.

GreenMachine thanked whatever deity there may be up there for Kim; he would never have jacked out of the database in time without her. He leapt away from the virtual construct of the database just as the Spider shot a web towards him.

GreenMachine would have been shouting joy at his escape, if he had survived it. GreenMachine's mind reeled as he looked down, seeing a blade stuck through his chest. He died before ever knowing who or what had killed him.

Kim saw, however, looking at the battle in shock as a UN Guardian buried his sword in GreenMachine's chest. GreenMachine's avatar disappeared before it even hit the ground. The Guardians were the UN-sanctioned police of the Internet. Where there was one, there were four in hiding. ArSiNiK saw the Guardian, but it was too late. The

hacker's avatar was gutted in under a minute, his body long ago shutting down from the pain.

"Orbital, get out of here now!" Kim said, already launching an exit. Orbital followed quickly behind. The pub was near empty, its only patrons AIs the group had installed for defense. No one paid attention to the commotion in the back -- no one except the bartender.

The AI leveled a shotgun from under the bar, pulling the trigger in a second. Orbital's head shattered as the buckshot contacted with it. Kim spun and ducked, dodging shots from the bar.

Turning to look at her attacker, Kim never felt as scared before as she did in that moment. A Guardian stood where the bartender had, the UN hacker overtaking one of the more powerful defense programs. That was a Guardian's claim to fame, their ability to over take almost any program on the Net, using UN backdoors.

Kim would have sworn there were no UN entry points in the bartender program, but that was a thought for another time. Backflipping from her standing position, Kim landed in the portal before the Guardian could fire another shot.

Kim ripped her goggles from her face, sweat dripping from her nose, her body racked with fear. Kim knew the Guardian could trace her exit point. She had to get out of here, now. Ripping the VR console from the plug in the wall, Kim quickly threw the piece of hardware out the window, its components shattering once they hit the ground. Grabbing her bag, Kim left the rented hotel room, running for the fire escape at the end of the hallway.

Once she was done scrambling down the ladder, her feet now pounding against the cement as she ran into the New Orleans night, she finally thought about her next action. /Got to disappear, then get what information we did download from Regenetics. And I know the one person who can help me/ Kim thought, her course now set in her mind.

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"This is a CNN Special Report.

"Over 130 personal VR sites across the Net were hacked today, postings of a nefarious plot gracing the sites instead of their regular content. Here's Colby Allen with details, Colby?"

"Thank you, Shelly. A month ago we reported on the bombing of Palm Springs by the UN, which we were told was due to an outbreak of a new strain of Pox. Today, new information points to a completely different answer.

"Pox is actually a code name for a new VR police program, its coding becoming a beacon to an airborne virus that kills its victims on-site. Regenetics, a leading genetic company, developed the virus and was using Palm Springs as a controlled experiment area. The Pox program latched onto different consoles for a week, while the UN cut off all communication to the outside world, then watched as the airborne killer destroyed the town. The bombing appears to be an attempt to cover up their tracks.

"The program latches onto a surfer's VR console, tracing the location back to a Regenetics mainframe. The location is then beamed to a satellite, which then teleports the virus into the room the traced netsurfer is accessing from. Putrefied flesh is all that remains in the virus' wake.

"The horrifying part of this story is that Regenetics has a contract with the UN, working on a variety of projects for the world government. This project was obviously not meant to be revealed, and the only reason it was lies in the hands of someone bearing the name TarotGirl.

"This mysterious hacker took over 134 sites at last count, posting files detailing all the plans Regenetics had for the Pox program. There was also one file in the bunch that has humanitarians in an uproar: the firsthand account of someone living in Palm Springs during these tests.

"The UN has made no comment, while Regenetics management has been arrested, the firsthand account leading to swift punishment for the accused. TarotGirl, if you're watching, thank you. The UN has a lot to answer for now, and without you, we would never have known what questions to ask. This is Colby Allen, signing off."

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Kim smiled, an action she hadn't taken part in for the past month. She turned to the avatar standing next to her, the athletic avatar different then the hacker's real appearance. The one noticeable thing was the eyes. The eyes shined at you with a brilliant blue, looking into your soul, almost.

"I couldn't have pulled that off without you," Kim said.

The man just looked over at Kim, stating evenly, "No, you didn't need me. The information would have found its way out; it always does. This time, it's a lot sooner then most. The UN has a stranglehold on the public, and half of them don't even realize that it's a bad thing. This will change a few minds, and that is the key to any revolution. Changing minds, showing the right way to do things. Justice will fall, and these little steps will help that outcome."

Kim bent down slightly, her lips kissing the man's virtual cheek. "Thank you, Donut."

Donut chuckled, "Like I would have said no to such a great hack." His avatar smiled in glee at their accomplishments.

"Well, I have to go. I can't stay in one location too long, now that my ID numbers are a wanted item by the Guardians," Kim said, beginning to open her exit.

"Where will you go?" Donut asked.

"I have no clue. My life has completely changed in the past month, and now with Clay gone, I don't have much holding me down. I'll see you, though," Kim answered, already regretting leaving Donut.



"You and your threats. Take care, TG," Donut said.

"I will," Kim said, entering the exit portal. "Goodbye, old friend," was the last thing Donut heard as the woman left cyberspace.

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> <br> DIGITAL DREAMS

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This story was an attempt to show a little bit more about the Net and the people who use it. You'll see Kim and Clay appear again in Blue Devil, just not in ways you'd expect. Let me know if I did a good job, or if my tossing salad skills are better than my writing. E-mail me at [hazardous\\_designs@yahoo.com](mailto:hazardous_designs@yahoo.com).

End  
file.